

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

INFO USDEL SAN CLEMENTE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 060120

EXDIS TOSEC 68

WHITE HOUSE PLEASE PASS TO SECRETARY ROGERS IN SAN CLEMENTE

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BANGKOK, SAIGON, APRIL
2, FROM VIENTIANE RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2454

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LA

SUBJECT: RLG/ LPF NEGOTIATION ON FORMATION OF A NEW COALITION
GOVERNMENT

REF: VIENTIANE 2384

BEGIN SUMMARY: LPF HAS LMSVCRYIDCI JTION (AS RECEIVED CORRECTION
TO FOLLOW) OF NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT
TO AGREEMENT ON OUTSTANDING IOYOWQ (AS RECEIVED CORRECTION TO
FOLLOW) ISSUES. UNLESS PRIME MINISTER
CAN PERSUADE LPF TO SEPARATE POLITICAL FROM MILITARY ISSUES, EARLY
FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT APPEARS DOUBTFUL. END SUMMARY.
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1. ON APRIL 2 DCM CALLED ON PHENG PHONGSAVAN TO FIND OUT WHETHER PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN RLG/ LPF NEGOTIATIONS ON FORMATION OF A NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. PHENG SAID THAT HE HAD READ CAREFULLY 26- PAGE DOCUMENT EMBODYING DRAFT PROTOCOLS WHICH PHOUN HAD BROUGHT BACK FROM SAM NEUA, AND HAD TWO MEETINGS WITH PHOUN. PHENG SAID HE WAS DISCOURAGED BY PHOUN SIPRASEUTH' S INSISTENCE THAT BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY ISSUES MUST BE SETTLED SIMULTANEOUSLY AND COALITION GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE FORMED BEFORE AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON OUTSTANDING MILITARY PROBLEMS. BY LINKING THE POLITICAL ISSUES, WHICH PHENG BELIEVES CAN BE SETTLED QUITE RAPIDLY, TO MILITARY PROBLEMS, THE LPF ARE OBSTRUCTING SOUVANNA' S EFFORTS TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT BY APRIL 15.

2. AFTER TALKING WITH PRIME MINISTER THIS MORNING AND AFTER TWO MEETINGS WITH PHOUN, PHENG MINIMIZED DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL FIELD. HE SAID THERE IS VIRTUAL AGREEMENT ON COMPOSITION OF TEMPORARY JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL AND HE THOUGHT THAT THE OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES ON ALLOCATION OF PORTFOLIOS REPRESENT NO INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES PROVIDED BOTH SIDES ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN EARLY FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT. HE STRESSED THAT BOTH SIDES HAD ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE THAT IF ONE SIDE HOLDS THE TOP POSITION IN A MINISTRY, THE NUMBER TWO SLOT WOULD GO TO THE OTHER SIDE. IN THIS WAY BOTH SIDES WILL BE REPRESENTED IN EACH MINISTRY. ACCORDING TO PHENG, SOUVANNA IS WILLING TO GIVE TOP POSITION TO THE LPF IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE, AND ECONOMY AS LONG AS RLG CAN HOLD ON TO DEFENSE, INTERIOR AND EDUCATION. OTHER TOP JOBS COULD GO TO THE " NEUTRAL " TECHNICIANS. PHENG SAID THAT ONE BARGAINING SESSION COULD IRON OUT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT IF LPF IS TRULY EMBUED WITH DESIRE TO SETTLE. HOWEVER PHOUN' S INSISTENCE THAT POLITICAL FEATURES OF VIENTIANE AGREEMENT CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED UNTIL AGREEMENT REACHED ON MILITARY ISSUES WOULD INDICATE LPF WANTS TO POSPONE FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.

3. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, PHENG SAID LPF' S 26- PAGE DOCUMENT INCLUDES FEATURES COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE TO RLG. NEGOTIATIONS TO BRING TWO SIDES CLOSER TOGETHER WOULD TAKE WEEKS MONTHS OR PERHAPS EVEN LONGER. SPECIFICALLY PHENG MENTIONED THREE FEATURES OF LPF DRAFT WHICH ARE UNACCEPTABLE TO RLG:

A. COMPLETE NEUTRALIZATION OF VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG. LPF IN-

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SISTS THAT ALL REPEAT ALL TROOPS MUST BE MOVED OUT OF THESE TWO CITIES.

B. ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLEAR LINE OF DEMARCATION OF TERRITORY HELD BY EACH SIDE. BACK IN 1962 THE TWO SIDES COULD NEVER AGREE ON SUCH A LINE AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT TWO SIDES COULD AGREE ON IT NOW. IN ADDITION, PHENG SAID LPF IS INSISTING ON THE CREATION OF A NO MAN'S LAND BETWEEN THE TWO ZONES. IN CERTAIN AREAS SUCH AS THAKEK WHERE THE LPF IS ALREADY ON THE MEKONG, THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE. FAR GENERAL STAFF WHICH HAS BEEN CONSULTED FINDS THIS FEATURE PARTICULARLY UN-ACCEPTABLE.

C. LPF REFUSAL TO ENDOW ICC AND LAO JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION WITH ANY SUPERVISORY OR CONTROL POWERS. LPF ARGUE THAT GRANTING OF SUCH POWERS TO ICC IS ABDICATION OF LAO SOVEREIGNTY.

4. PHENG SAID THAT AFTER DISCUSSING WITH SOUVANNA LPF DOCUMENT, THEY CONCLUDED THAT LPF IS REALLY TRYING TO ESTABLISH TWO IMPERMEABLE ZONES WHICH IS CONTRARY TO SOUVANNA'S EFFORT TO MAINTAIN UNITY OF LAOS AND INTEGRATE LPF INTO NATION.

5. FACED WITH WHAT SOUVANNA CONSIDERS SWITCH IN LPF POSITION, PRIME MINISTER HAS SUMMONED PHOUN SIPRASEUTH FOR LATER THIS AFTERNOON IN ORDER TO URGE LPF TO SEPARATE POLITICAL ISSUES FROM MILITARY PROBLEMS BECAUSE OTHERWISE COALITION GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE FORMED IN NEAR FUTURE. PHENG EXPECTS PHOUN TO TRANSMIT SOUVANNA'S REQUEST TO SAM NEUA AND ANSWER WILL NOT BE KNOWN FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS.

6. IF SOUVANNA'S APPEAL IS NOT HEEDDED BY SAM NEUA, PHENG THINKS THAT SOUVANNA MAY TAKE FOLLOWING STEPS:

A. APPEAL DIRECTLY TO SOUPHANOUVONG IN PERSONAL MESSAGE TO GET LPF TO ADHERE TO TIME SCHEDULE ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT WHICH CALLS FOR FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT BY MARCH 23.

B. HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE CALLING ATTENTION TO RLG'S GOOD WILL IN EFFORT TO CARRY OUT FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT AND PUTTING ONUS ON IMPASSE ON SAM NEUA.

C. ASK USG TO PUT PRESSURE ON HANOI TO HAVE LPF COMPLY WITH PROVISIONS OF VIENTIANE AGREEMENT REGARDING FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT.

7. DCM ASKED PHENG HOW HE EXPLAINED WHAT APPEARS TO BE SWITCH IN LPF POSITION AFTER HAVING PRESSED SO HARD FOR EARLY FORMATION OF NEW

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